

CLAIMS

I/we claim:

5 1. A method of predicting the geographic location of a user of a communication network based on the user's network address, the method comprising the steps of:

 (1) obtaining and storing data purportedly disclosing the geographic location of a plurality of users of the network;

10 (2) obtaining and storing the network addresses of the plurality of users; and

 (3) correlating the geographic location data with the network address data to generate data predicting the geographic location of a user of the network as a function of the network address through which the user accesses the network.

15 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a predicted geographic area and a rating of the likelihood that the predicted geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the network through that network address.

20 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a plurality of overlapping predicted geographic areas of increasing size, and, for each such geographic area, a rating of the likelihood that the predicted geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the network through that network address.

25 4. The method of claim 3 wherein said plurality of geographic areas of increasing size comprise at least a city and a state.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein said geographic location data comprises one or more of a home or business address and a telephone number.

5 6. The method of claim 1 wherein step (1) comprises obtaining said geographic location data voluntarily from said users.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein said network is the Internet and step (1) comprises operating a website on the Internet and asking users of the website to self
10 report their geographic locations.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein step (1) comprises requiring users of the website to self report their geographic locations in order to utilize a service provided through said website.

15 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said geographic location data comprises the users' self reported addresses.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein step (2) comprises reading and storing at a
20 node of the network the network address of users who access data at that node through the network.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
(4) obtaining data indicative of the integrity of the geographic location data; and

wherein step (3) further comprises further correlating the geographic location data and network address data with the integrity data to generate a rating of the likely accuracy of the predictive geographic location data.

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12. The method of claim 11 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a plurality of overlapping predicted geographic areas of increasing size, and, for each such geographic area, a rating of the likelihood that the predicted geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the network through that network address.

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13. The method of claim 11 wherein step (1) comprises obtaining said geographic location data voluntarily from said users.

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14. The method of claim 13 wherein said network is the Internet and step (1) comprises operating a website on the Internet and asking users of the website to self report information indicative of their geographic locations.

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15. The method of claim 14 wherein the website provides a service whereby users of said website transact business with other users of said website and further wherein users of said website provide feedback information to said website about other users of the website with whom they have transacted business indicative of the integrity of the other users and wherein the integrity data comprises said feedback information.

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16. The method of claim 14 wherein an entity sells goods via the website and requires a user, when purchasing goods, to self report an address to which the user

wishes the goods to be shipped and a payment vehicle to which the cost of the goods is to be charged and wherein the integrity data comprises a rating based on a correlation of the self reported ship to address and a billing address for the payment vehicle.

5 17. A computer readable product embodied on computer readable media readable by a computing device for predicting the geographic location of a user of a communication network based on the user's network address, said product comprising computer executable instructions for:

 obtaining and storing data purportedly disclosing the geographic location of a
10 plurality of users of the network;

 obtaining and storing the network addresses of the plurality of users; and
 correlating the geographic location data with the network address data to
generate data predicting the geographic location of a user of the network as a function
of the network address through which the user accesses the network.

15 18. The product of claim 17 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a predicted geographic area and a rating of the likelihood that the predicted geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the network through that network address.

20 19. The product of claim 18 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a plurality of overlapping predicted geographic areas of increasing size, and, for each such geographic area, a rating of the likelihood that the predicted geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the
25 network through that network address.

20. The product of claim 19 wherein said plurality of geographic areas of increasing size comprise at least a city, a state, and a country.

5 21. The product of claim 17 wherein said geographic location data comprises the users' self reported addresses.

22. The product of claim 17 further comprising:
computer executable instructions for obtaining data indicative of the integrity of
10 the geographic location data; and
wherein the computer executable instructions for correlating further comprises
computer executable instructions for further correlating the geographic location data and
network address data with the integrity data to generate a rating of the likely accuracy of
the predictive geographic location data.

15 23. The product of claim 22 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a plurality of overlapping predicted geographic areas of increasing size, and, for each such geographic area, a rating of the likelihood that the predicted geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the
20 network through that network address.

24. The product of claim 23 wherein the integrity data comprises data provided by users of a website about other users of the website with whom they have transacted business that is indicative of the integrity of the other users.

25. A method of predicting the geographic location of a user of the Internet who visits a Website on the Internet based on the user's Internet Protocol address, the method comprising the steps of:

5 (1) obtaining and storing data purportedly disclosing the geographic location of a plurality of users of the network who visit the website;

(2) obtaining and storing the network addresses of the plurality of users;

(3) correlating the geographic location data with the network address data to generate data predicting the geographic location of a user of the network as a function
10 of the user's network address through which the user accesses the network; and

(4) when a user of the network visits the website, predicting the user's geographic location based on the predictive geographic location data.

26. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of:

15 (5) providing geographically targeted advertising to users who visit a website on the Internet based on the predictive geographic location data.

27. The method of claim 25 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a predicted geographic area and a rating of the likelihood that the
20 predicted geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the network through that network address.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a plurality of overlapping predicted geographic areas of increasing
25 size, and, for each such geographic area, a rating of the likelihood that the predicted

geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the network through that network address.

29. The method of claim 25 wherein step (1) comprises obtaining said
5 geographic location data voluntarily from said users.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein step (1) comprises asking users of the website to self report their geographic locations.

10 31. The method of claim 30 wherein step (1) comprises requiring users of the website to self report their geographic locations in order to utilize a service provided through said website.

15 32. The method of claim 30 wherein step (2) comprises reading and storing at a node of the network the network address of users who accesses that node.

33. The method of claim 29 further comprising the step of:
(6) obtaining data indicative of the integrity of the geographic location data; and
wherein step (3) further comprises further correlating the geographic location
20 data and network address data with the integrity data to generate a rating of the likely accuracy that the predictive geographic location data.

25 34. The method of claim 33 wherein the predictive data comprises, for each network address, a plurality of overlapping predicted geographic areas of increasing size, and, for each such geographic area, a rating of the likelihood that the predicted

geographic area accurately reflects the geographic location of users who access the network through that network address.

5 35. The method of claim 27 wherein the website provides a service whereby users of said website transact business with other users of said website and further wherein users of said website provide feedback information to said website about other users of the website with whom they have transacted business indicative of the integrity of the other users and wherein the integrity data comprises said feedback information.

10 36. The method of claim 27 wherein an entity sells goods via the website and requires a user, when purchasing goods, to self report an address to which the user wishes the goods to be shipped and a payment vehicle to which the cost of the goods is to be charged and wherein the integrity data comprises a rating based on a correlation
15 of the self reported ship to address and a billing address for the payment vehicle.